Claims

1. An apparatus for translating a first set of part numbers into a second set of part numbers for use in a design collaboration and supply chain management network, including

a set of client devices, wherein each client device included in said set is under the control of a user who wishes to engage in a business transaction that requires the usage of a part number;

a dedicated server remotely coupled to at least one client device included in said set of client devices, wherein said dedicated server provides a hub in said design collaboration and supply chain management network;

a database coupled to said dedicated server, wherein said database includes a set of proprietary part numbers, a set of universal part numbers and a set of associations between said proprietary part numbers and said set of universal part numbers;

a computer program coupled to said database, wherein said computer program includes instructions for translating said part numbers;

a communications network, for remotely coupling said set of client devices and said dedicated server.

2. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein each universal part number included in said set of universal part numbers is associated with one or more proprietary part numbers included in said set of proprietary part numbers.

3. An apparatus as in claim 1, also including a translation module for translating one or more part numbers associated with an order into different part numbers that the recipient of a document readily understands.

4. An apparatus as in claim 3, wherein said translation module is used to prepare commercial documents.

5. An apparatus as in claim 4, wherein said apparatus also includes a management module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part numbers and enter new part numbers.

6. An apparatus as in claim 1, wherein said part numbers are associated with the titles of people who provide a specific service.

7. A method for translating a first set of proprietary part numbers over a network, including steps of

receiving a first set of proprietary part numbers from a client worksations, wherein a user of said client workstation wishes to engaged in supply chain management, design collaboration, or the purchase or sale of services or fungible goods;

checking a database for said first set of proprietary part numbers;

translating said first set of proprietary part numbers into a universal part number;

determining the availability of a part associated with said universal part number;

generating a document summarizing a transaction involving one or more parts associated with said universal part number,

translating said document from said universal numbers into a proprietary part number included in said set of proprietary part numbers; and

storing a record of said transaction in a database.

8. A method as in claim 7, wherein each said universal part number is associated with other part numbers such as may be associated with different suppliers or manufacturers.

9. A method as in claim 7, wherein said database includes a translation module for translating one or more proprietary part numbers associated with an order into different part numbers that the recipient of a document readily understands.

10. A method as in claim 9, wherein said translation module is used to prepare commercial documents.

11. A method as in claim 7, wherein said database includes a management module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part numbers or enter new part numbers.

12. A memory, including a set of instructions executable by a processor, said set of instructions including instructions for

receiving a first set of proprietary part numbers from a client workstations, wherein a user of said client workstation wishes to engaged in supply chain management, design collaboration, or the purchase or sale of services or fungible goods;

checking a database for said first set of proprietary part numbers;

translating said first set of proprietary part numbers into a universal part number;

determining the availability of a part associated with said universal part number;

generating a document summarizing a transaction involving one or more parts associated with said universal part number,

translating said document from said universal numbers into a proprietary part number included in said set of proprietary part numbers; and

storing a record of said transaction in a database.

13. A memory as in claim 12, wherein each said universal part number is associated with other part numbers such as may be associated with different suppliers or manufacturers.

14. A memory as in claim 12, wherein said database includes a translation module for translating one or more proprietary part numbers associated with an order into different part numbers that the recipient of a document readily understands.

15. A memory as in claim 14, wherein said translation module is used to prepare commercial documents.

16. A memory as in claim 12, wherein said database includes a management module and rule base that identifies what parties may create associations between part numbers and enter new part numbers.